



## **National Indian Education Association**

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### **NIEA RESOLUTION 11-002**

TITLE: Support for the Native CLASS Act (S.1262)

**WHEREAS**, the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) was established in 1970 for the purpose of advocating, planning, and promoting the unique and special educational needs of American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians; and

**WHEREAS**, NIEA as the largest national Indian organization of American Indian, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiian educators, administrators, parents and students in the United States, provides a forum to discuss and act upon issues affecting the education of Indian and Native people; and

**WHEREAS**, through its' unique relationship with Indian nations and tribes, the federal government has established programs and resources to meet the educational needs of American Indians, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiians, residing on and off their reserved or non-reserved homelands; and

**WHEREAS**, schools should be centers for learning, as well as environments that strengthen the identity of Native students through language, culture, values, and traditions in order to build foundations and connections between students, teachers, families, tribes, and communities; and

**WHEREAS**, graduation and literacy rates for Natives are lower than all other racial/ethnic groups due primarily to a lack of engagement in curriculum and instruction as well as resource inequities that lead to poor learning environments for Indian children; and

**WHEREAS**, data has proven that language and culture based education results in improvements in student academic achievement, engagement, attendance, and civic responsibility; and

**WHEREAS**, Native students value curriculums that are relevant to their lives and require the integration of meaningful lessons about culture, history and place, along with assessments that reflect the goals of what successful education programs are as defined by those who design and implement them; and

**WHEREAS**, there is a need for increased collaboration between the Department of Education (DOE) and the Department of Interior (DOI), to better serve the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools in an efficient way to ensure that resources and capacity building between both departments are being coordinated effectively; and

**WHEREAS**, the development and training of Native and non-Native teachers and administrators that are culturally competent and knowledgeable about Native learning styles increases engagement and student to teacher relations as well as improves the academic achievement of Native learners; and

**WHEREAS**, schools and classrooms that are populated by Native Americans are routinely underfunded and in a state of disrepair, creating unsafe learning environments and denying Native students an equal chance to succeed; now

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that NIEA does hereby support the Native CLASS Act (S. 1262), introduced by Senator Daniel Akaka from Hawai'i; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NIEA supports this bill because it addresses the following issues:

- 1) Increases the amount of language and culture in curriculums while aligning the assessments to the intention of the programs
- 2) Supports pipelines that increase the number of Native instructors and exempts Native language teachers from the highly qualified requirement.
- 3) Gives some tribes greater control of the education of their children, including the authorization that tribes assume the roles of SEAs or LEAs with respect to schools on Indian land
- 4) Establishes a Joint Oversight Board to coordinate Indian education policies and assistance between the DOE and DOI
- 5) Supports tribal colleges and universities by establishing adult education and family literacy programs, in addition to creating competitive grant programs to encourage tribal colleges to have in-school innovation programs to improve Indian school facilities.

Submitted by: Denny Hurtado

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